



**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

Commission Meeting: January 13, 2005

Commissioners

Present

Deborah Wood Dorsey, Chairperson

Mario Acosta-Velez
James E. Joiner
Monica Palacio
Darryl Ross
Michael E. Ward

Absent

Reverend Susan Blue
Joe E. Leonard
Warner H. Session
Christine Warnke

For the Commission Staff

Cornelius R. Alexander, Jr., Chief Hearing Examiner

For the Office of Human Rights

Alexis Taylor, General Counsel

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Deborah Wood Dorsey called the meeting to order at 6:16 P.M.

II. ROLL CALL/ANNOUNCEMENT OF QUORUM

In the absence of Secretary Warnke, Chief Hearing Examiner Alexander called the roll. A quorum was not achieved.

III. APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2004 MINUTES

The Commission reviewed the November 18, 2004 minutes and made the following correction:

-Page Three, under Vice-Chairperson's Report, third line, change title of event to "Language Access: Opening the Doors to Government Services."

Because the Commission did not have a quorum, the adoption of the minutes was postponed until a quorum could be achieved.

IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

In the absence of the Director, Alexis Taylor, General Counsel, gave the director's report. She reported that in November 2004, the Office of Human Rights (OHR) docketed 44 new complaints of discrimination. During the same month, the OHR closed 20 cases, 11 of which no probable cause was found. In December 2004, the OHR docketed 41 new cases and closed 45 cases. Since October 1, 2004, the OHR has docketed 112 cases.

V. CHIEF HEARING EXAMINER'S REPORT

Chief Hearing Examiner Cornelius R. Alexander, Jr. gave the January Bi-Monthly Report. He stated the OHR certified *Ammen v. Facilities Management Company* to the Commission for a public hearing. This is the first case before the Commission that involves a violation of the Family Medical Leave Act.

Mr. Alexander also reported that the Commission issued proposed decision and orders and *Bowman v. Safeway* and *White v. Bath and Body Works*. In *Bowman*, the hearing examiner recommended that the complaint be dismissed because the Complainant failed to establish a *prima facie* case of race discrimination. In *White*, the hearing examiner recommended that the complaint be dismissed on the basis of failure to prosecute.

Also reported, a motion to dismiss was filed before the Commission in *Williams v. Law Offices of Jeffrey Raden* requesting dismissal of the complaint because the Complainant failed to abide by a Commission order compelling discovery responses. The hearing examiner was currently reviewing the motion.

In addition to the bi-monthly report, the Chief Hearing Examiner gave the Commission's annual report. He stated that at the end of fiscal year 2004, the Commission had 23 cases on the docket with 18 of those involving employment matters. Mr. Alexander also reported that race and sex were the two dominant protected classes that were being litigated before the Commission. He also stated that the Commission closed 6 cases, achieving \$150,000 in benefits to complainants. Mr. Alexander further reported that the Commission had a very successful community outreach program in 2004. The Commission sponsored a panel discussion in celebration of International Human Rights Day, sponsored a Town Forum with the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community and participated in the Capital Pride Festival.

VI. CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Chairperson Deborah Wood Dorsey reported that under the reorganization of the City Council, the Commission and the Office of Human Rights oversight committee is now the Committee on Government Operations which is chaired by Councilmember Vincent Orange. The Chairperson stated that she and Director Saunders would meet with Councilmember Orange to discuss the operations of the Office of Human Rights and the Commission.

In other matters, the Chairperson stated that the Commission would continue expanding its community outreach in 2005. She stated she had some ideas in making presentations to community groups and organizations.

VII. VICE-CHAIRPERSON'S COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

Vice-Chairperson Mario Acosta-Velez reported on the success of the Commission's panel discussion for International Human Rights Day held on December 9, 2004. The topic of the event was "Language Access: Opening the Doors to Government Services." The panel discussion was to honor the passage of the Language Access Act of 2004, which helps limited English proficient residents have greater access to the services of the District of Columbia government. The dialogue between the panelists involved issues regarding culture competency, government responsiveness and the difference between individuals understanding simple diversity training and developing cultural competency in government agencies. The Vice-Chairperson stated that District Cable Channel 16 recorded the event, which airs throughout the months of January and February.

The Vice-Chairperson also stated that in light of the success of the Language Access panel discussion, the Commission should sponsor a roundtable discussion where people can continue their conversations regarding the development of culture competency training. In addition, the Vice-Chairperson recommended that the Commission should conduct public hearings to determine whether the Language Access act has had an impact on the immigrant community.

VIII. NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS

Because of the lack of a quorum, the nominations and elections for Vice-Chairperson and Secretary were postponed until the next meeting.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

No old business reported.

X. NEW BUSINESS

No new business reported.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairperson Dorsey welcomed Monica Palacio as the newest commissioner. Commissioner James Joiner announced that his second term as commissioner expired and he would not be seeking a third term. However, Commissioner Joiner stated he would remain on the Commission until he finalized the *Dale* decision.

In addition, Chairperson Dorsey announced that the Commission will schedule a training session for the new commissioners and a refresher course for the other commissioners.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

The January 2005 meeting was adjourned at 6:59 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Cornelius R. Alexander, Jr. for
Christine Warnke